

THE PILGRIM

In 1609 a small congregation of Separatists from the village of Scrooby in the west of England managed to flee to Holland, where the members hoped to practice their religion free from all ecclesiastical authority. Hardships, discontent, and fear drove them in 1620 to bargain for land in Virginia; bad seamanship and mismanagement took them, and some adventurers who came along for luck and financial gain, to New England; courage and necessity forced them to take over land to which they had no legal right. Virtually apotheosized in the nineteenth century, they became for us the Pilgrim Fathers. As Separatists, however, they were a minority sect in the Puritan movement. They wanted, simply enough, to be left alone to live and worship as they felt they must. After some early setbacks, their little colony prospered; they raised their crops, dealt in beaver pelts, got along with the Indians, and worshipped as they would; they were even able to buy out London investors in their enterprise. Theirs was to be an independent, communal, almost patriarchal society. But they were gradually drawn into the orbit of the colony established by orthodox Puritans at Massachusetts Bay. They joined the New England Confederacy in 1643, were merged with the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1684, and so lost their separateness.

What the Plymouth colonists came to be for nineteenth-century Americans is made clearest by the narrative history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, written by their perennial governor, William Bradford. When it was first printed in 1856, its very grace, dignity, matter-of-fact self-assurance, and simple yet practical idealism made, above all, for the myth and the cult of the Pilgrim Fathers. Myth and cult, however, and attendant snobishness, sentimentality, and ancestor-worship cannot destroy the strength of Bradford and his fellows. This remains in *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

WILLIAM BRADFORD

(1590-1657)

Bibliographical Note. The most complete edition of *The History of Plymouth Plantation* is that of W. C. Ford, in 2 vols. (Boston, 1912); a more readily accessible scholarly edition is that of W. T. Davis (New York, 1908). The text of the following selections follows that of the Davis edition, pp. 44-48, 92-97, 106-111, 146-147, 390-391. On Bradford, see the article by S. E. Morison in *The Dictionary of American Biography*; on the *History*, see E. F. Bradford, "Conscious Art in Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*," *New England Quarterly*, I (1928), 133-157.

from THE HISTORY OF PLYMOUTH PLANTATION (written 1620-1651)

["REASONS AND CAUSES OF THEIR REMOVAL," 1609-1617]

After they had lived in this citie [Leyden] about some 11. or 12. years, (which is the more observable being the whole time of that famous truce¹ between that state and the Spaniards,) and sundrie of them were taken away by death, and many others begane to be well stricken in years, the grave mistris Experience haveing taught them many things, those prudent governours with sundrie of the sager members begane both deeply to apprehend their present dangers, and wisely to foresee the future, and thinke of timly remedy. In the agitation of their thoughts, and much discours of things hear aboute, at length they began to incline to this conclusion, of remoovall to some other place. Not out of any newfanglednes, or other such like giddie humor, by which men are oftentimes transported to their great hurt and danger, but for sundrie weightie and solid reasons; some of the cheefe of which I will hear breffly touch. And first, they saw and found by experience the hardnes of the place and countrie to be such, as few in comparison would come to them, and fewer that would bide it out, and continew with them. For many that came to them, and many more that desired to be with them, could not

¹ This truce, signed April 9, 1609, was to expire in 1621.—Davis.

endure that great labor and hard fare, with other inconveniences which they underwent and were contented with. But though they loved their persons, approved their cause, and honoured their sufferings, yet they left them as it were weeping, as Orpah did her mother in law Naomi, or as those Romans did Cato in Utica, who desired to be excused and borne with, though they could not all be Catoes. For many, though they desired to enjoye the ordinances of God in their puritie, and the libertie of the gossell with them, yet, alas, they admitted of bondage, with danger of conscience, rather than to indure these hardships; yea, some preferred and chose the prisons in England, rather then this libertie in Holland, with these afflictions. But it was thought that if a better and easier place of living could be had, it would draw many, and take away these discouragements. Yea, their pastor would often say, that many of those who both wrote and preached now against them, if they were in a place wher they might have libertie and live comfortably, they would then practise as they did.

2¹⁷. They saw that though the people generally bore all these difficulties very cherfully, and with a resolute courage, being in the best and strength of their years, yet old age began to steale on many of them, (and their great and continuall labours, with other crosses and sorrows, hastened it before the time,) so as it was not only probably thought, but apparently seen, that within a few years more they would be in danger to scatter, by necessities pressing them, or sinke under their burdens, or both. And therefore according to the devine proverb, that a wise man seeth the plague when it cometh, and hideth him selfe, Pro. 22. 3, so they like skillfull and beaten souldiers were fearfull either to be intrapped or surrounded by their enemies, so as they should neither be able to fight nor flie; and therfor thought it better to dislodge betimes to some place of better advantage and less danger, if any such could be found. Thirdly; as necessitie was a taskmaster over them, so they were forced to be such, not only to their servants, but in a sorte, to their dearest children; the which as it did not a little wound the tender harts of many a loving father and mother, so it produced likewise sundrie sad and sorrowful effects. For many of

their children, that were of best dispositions and gracious inclinations, haveing lerned to bear the yoke in their youth, and willing to bear parte of their parents burden, were, often times, so oppressed with their hevie labours, that though their minds were free and willing, yet their bodies bowed under the weight of the same, and became decreped in their early youth; the vigor of nature being consumed in the very budd as it were. But that which was more lamentable, and of all sorowes most heave to be borne, was that many of their children, by these occasions, and the great licentiousness of youth in that countrie, and the manifold temptations of the place, were drawne away by evil examples into extravagant and dangerous courses, getting the raines off their necks, and departing from their parents. Some became souldiers, others tooke upon them far viages by sea, and other some worse courses, tending to dissolutnes and the danger of their soules, to the great greife of their parents and dishonour of God. So that they saw their posteritie would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted.

Lastly, (and which was not least), a great hope and inward zeall they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way therunto, for the propagating and advancing the gossell of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.

These, and some other like reasons, moved them to undertake this resolution of their removall; the which they afterward prosecuted with so great difficulties, as by the sequell will appeare.

The place they had thoughts on was some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitfull and fit for habitation, being devoyd of all civill inhabitants, wher ther are only salvage and brutish men, which range up and downe, little otherwise then the wild beasts of the same. This proposition being made publike and coming to the scanning of all, it raised many variable opinions amongst men, and caused many fears and doubts amongst them selves. Some, from their reasons and hops conceived, laboured to stir up and encourage the rest to under-

take and prosecute the same; others, againe, out of their fears, objected against it, and sought to diuert from it, alledging many things, and those neither unreasonable nor unprobable; as that it was a great designe, and subjecte to many unconceivable perills and dangers; as, besides the casualties of the seas (which none can be freed from) the length of the vioage was such, as the weak bodies of women and other persons worne out with age and traville (as many of them were) could never be able to endure. And yet if they should, the miseries of the land which they should be exposed unto, would be to hard to be borne; and lickly, some or all of them together, to consume and utterly to ruinate them. For ther they should be liable to famine, and nakednes, and the wante, in a manner, of all things. The chang of aire, diate, and drinking of water, would infecte their bodies with sore sicknesses, and grevous diseases. And also those which should escape or overcome these difficulties, should yett be in continuall danger of the salvage people, who are cruell, barbarous, and most trecherous, being most furious in their rage, and merclies wher they overcome; not being contente only to kill, and take away life, but delight to tormente men in the most bloodie manner that may be; fleaing² some alive with the shells of fishes, cutting of the members and joynts of others by peesmeale, and broiling on the coles, eate the collops of their flesh in their sight whilst they live; with other cruelties horrible to be related. And surely it could not be thought but the very hearing of these things could not but move the very bowels of men to grate within them, and make the weak to quake and tremble. It was furdur objected, that it would require greater summes of money to furnish such a vioage, and to fit them with necessaries, then their consumed estats would amounte too; and yett they must as well looke to be seconded with supplies,³ as presently to be transported. Also many presidents of ill success, and lamentable miseries befalne others in the like designes, were easie to be found, and not forgotten to be alledged; besides their owne experience, in their former troubles and hard-

² Flaying.—*Davis*.

³ I. e., reinforcements.—*Davis*.

ships in their removall into Holand, and how hard a thing it was for them to live in that strange place, though it was a neighbour countrie, and a civill and rich comone wealth.

It was answered, that all great and honourable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be both enterprised and overcome with answerable courages. It was granted the dangers were great, but not desperate; the difficulties were many, but not invincible. For though their were many of them likly, yet they were not cartaine; it might be sundrie if the things feared might never befall; others by providente care and the use of good means, might in a great measure be prevented; and all of them, through the help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne, or overcome. True it was, that such atempts were not to be made and undertaken without good ground and reason; not rashly or lightly as many have done for curiositie or hope of gaine, etc. But their condition was not ordinarie; their ends were good and honourable; their calling lawfull, and urgente; and therefore they might expecte the blessing of God in their proceeding. Yea, though they should loose their lives in this action, yet might they have comforte in the same, and their endeavors would be honourable. They lived hear but as men in exile, and in a poore condition; and as great miseries might possibly befall them in this place, for the 12. years of truce were now⁴ out, and ther was nothing but beating of drummes, and preparing for warr, the events wherof are allway uncertaine. The Spaniard might prove as cruell as the salvages of America, and the famine and pestelence as sore hear as ther, and their libertie less to looke out for remedie. After many other periculer things answered and alledged on both sides, it was fully concluded by the major parte, to put this designe in execution, and to prosecute it by the best means they could.

[THE VOYAGE, 1620]

... now all being compacte together in one shipe, they put to sea againe with a prosperus winde, which continued diverce days

⁴ The truce between the Dutch and Spain would end in April, 1621.—*Davis*.

together, which was some discouragement unto them; yet according to the usual manner many were afflicted with sicknesses. And I may not omit to hear a speciall worke of Gods providence. There was a proud and very profane yonge man, one of the sea-men, of a lustie, able body, which made him the more haughty; he would alway be contemning the poor people in their sicknesses, and cursing them dayly with greivous execrations, and did not let to tell them, that he hoped to help to cast halfe of them over board before they came to their journeyes end, and to make mery with what they had; and if he were by any gently reproved, he would curse and swear most bitterly. But it pleased God before they came halfe seas over, to smite this yonge man with a greivous disease, of which he dyed in a desperate manner, and so was him selfe the first that was throwne overboard. Thus his curses light on his owne head; and it was an astonishment to all his fellows, for they noted it to be the just hand of God upon him.

After they had enjoyed faire winds and weather for a season, they were incountr'd many times with crosse winds, and met with many feirce stormes, with which the shipe was shroudly⁵ shaken, and her upper works made very leakie; and one of the maine beames in the midd ships was bowed and craked, which put them in some fear that the shipe could not be able to performe the viage. So some of the cheefe of the company, perceiving the mariners to feare the suffisience of the shipe, as appeared by their mutterings, they entred into serious consultation with the m^r and other officers of the ship, to consider in time of the danger; and rather to returne then to cast them selves into a desperate and inevitable perill. And truly ther was great distraction and difference of opinion amongst the mariners them selves; faine would they doe what could be done for their wages sake, (being now halfe the seas over,) and on the other hand they were loath to hazard their lives too desperately. But in examening of all opinions, the m^r and others affirmed they knew the ship to be stronge and firme under water; and for the buckling of the maine beame, ther was

⁵ Shrewdly, severely.—*Davis*.

a great iron scrue the passengers brought out of Holland, which would raise the beame into his place; the which being done, the carpenter and m^r affirmed that with a post put under it, set firme in the lower deck, and otherways bounde, he would make it sufficient. And as for the decks and upper workes they would calke them as well as they could, and though with the workeing of the ship they would not longe keepe stanch, yet ther would otherwise be not great danger, if they did not overpress her with sails. So they committed them selves to the will of God, and resolved to proceede. In sundrie of these stormes the winds were so feirce, and the seas so high, as they could not beare a knote of saile, but were forced to hull,⁶ for diverse days together. And in one of them, as they thus lay at hull, in a mighty storme, a lustie yonge man (called John Howland) coming upon some occasion above the gratings, was, with a seele⁷ of the shipe throwne into [the] sea; but it pleased God that he caught hould of the top-saile halliards, which hunge over board, and rane out at length; yet he held his hould (though he was sundrie fadomes under water) till he was held up by the same rope to the brime of the water, and then with a boat hooke and other means got into the shipe againe, and his life saved; and though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after, and became a profitable member both in church and commone wealthe. In all this viage ther died but one of the passengers, which was William Butten, a youth, servant to Samuel Fuller, when they drew near the coast. But to omit other things, (that I may be breefe,) after longe beating at sea they fell with that land which is called Cape Cod; the which being made and certainly knowne to be it, they were not a litle joyfull. After some deliberation had amongst them selves and with the m^r of the ship, they tacked aboute and resolved to stande for the southward (the wind and weather being faire) to Ande some place aboute Hudsons river for their habitation. But after they had sailed that course aboute halfe the day, they fell amongst dangerous shoulds and roring breakers, and they were so farr intangled

⁶ To drift.—*Davis*.

⁷ The "seale" of a ship is the tross in a rough sea.—*Davis*.

ther with as they conceived them selves in great danger; and the wind shrinking upon them withall, they resolved to bear up againe for the Cape, and thought them selves hapy to gett out of those dangers before night overtook them, as by Gods providence they did. And the next day they gott into the Cape-harbor wher they ridd in safteie. A word or too by the way of this cape; it was thus first named by Capten Gosnole and his company, An^o. 1602, and after by Capten Smith was caled Cape James; but it retains the former name amongst seamen. Also that pointe which first shewed those dangerous shoulds unto them, they called Pointe Care, and Tuckers Terrour; but the French and Dutch to this day call it Malabarr, by reason of those perillous shoulds, and the losses they have suffered their.

Being thus arived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the periles and miseries therof, againe to set their feete on the firme and stable earth, their proper elemente. And no marvell if they were thus joyefull, seeing wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on the coast of his owne Italy; as he affirmed, that he had rather remaine twentie years on his way by land, then pass by sea to any place in a short time; so tedious and dreadfull was the same unto him.

But hear I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amased at this poore peoples presente condition; and so I thinke will the reader too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which wente before), they had now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertaine or refresh their weatherbeaten bodys, no houses or much less townes to repaire too, to seeke for succoure. It is recorded in scripture⁸ as a mercie to the apostle and his shipwraaked company, that the barbarians shewed them no smale kindnes in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they mette with them (as after will

⁸ "Act. 28."—Bradford.

appeare) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that cuntry know them to be sharp and violent, and subjecte to cruell and feirce stormes, deangerous to travill to known places, much more to serch an unknown coast. Besids, what could they see but a hidious and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? and what multitudes ther might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, goe up to the tope of Pisgah, to vew from this willdernes a more goodly cuntry to feed their hops; for which way soever they turnd their eys (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respecte of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a wetherbeaten face; and the whole cuntry, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage heiw. If they looked behind them, ther was the mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a maine barr and goulfe to sepearte them from all the civill parts of the world. If it be said they had a ship to sucour them, it is trew; but what heard they daly from the m^r and company? but that with speede they should looke out a place with their shallop, wher they would be at some near distance; for the season was shuch as he would not stirr from thence till a safe harbor was discovered by them wher they would be, and he might goe without danger; and that victells consumed apace, but he must and would keepe sufficient for them selves and their returne. Yea, it was muttered by some, that if they gott not a place in time, they would turne them and their goods ashore and leave them. Let it also be considered what weak hopes of supply and succoure they left behinde them, that might bear up their minds in this sade condition and trialls they were under; and they could not but be very smale. It is true, indeed, the affections and love of their brethren at Leyden was cordiall and entire towards them, but they had little power to help them, or them selves; and how the case stode betweene them and the marchants at their coming away, hath already been declared. What could now sustaine them but the spirite of God and his grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly

say: Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard their voyce, and looked on their adversitie, etc. Let them therefore praise the Lord, because he is good, and his mercies endure for ever. Yea, let them which have been redeemed of the Lord, shew how he hath delivered them from the hand of the oppressour. When they wandered in the deserte wilderness out of the way, and found no citie to dwell in, both hungry, and thirstie, their soule was overwhelmed in them. Let them confess before the Lord his loving kindnes, and his wonderfull works before the sons of men.

[THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT, EARLY HANDSHIPS,
AND INDIAN AFFAIRS, 1620-1621]

I shall a litle retorne backe and begine with a combination made by them before they came ashore, being the first foundation of their govermente in this place; occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in the ship—That when they came a shore they would use their owne liberie; for none had power to command them, the patente they had being for Virginia, and not for New-england, which belonged to an other Government, with which the Virginia Company had nothing to doe. And partly that shuch an acte by them done (this their condition considered) might be as firme as any patent, and in some respects more sure.

The forme was as followeth.

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are under-written, the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord King James; by the grace of Gods of Great Britaine, Franc, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc., having undertaken, for the glorie of God, and advancemente of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and countrie, a voyage to plant the first colonie in the Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence

of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just and equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the generall good of the Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd the 11. of November, in the year of the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fiftie fourth. An^o. Dom. 1620.

After this they chose, or rather confirmed, Mr. John Carver (a man godly and well approved amongst them) their Governour for that year. And after they had provided a place for their goods, or comone store, (which were long in unloading for want of boats, founles of winter weather, and sicknes of diverse,) and begune some small cottages for their habitation, as time would admitte, they mette and consulted of lawes and orders, both for their civill and military Govermente, as the necessitie of their condition did require, still adding therunto as urgent occasion in severall times, and as cases did require.

In these hard and difficulte beginnings they found some discontentes and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriages in other; but they were soone quelled and overcome by the wisdom, patience, and just and equall carriage of things by the Gov^r and better part, which slave faithfully together in the maine. But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in 2. or 3. moneths time halfe of their company dyed, especially in Jan: and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvie and other diseases, which this long vioage and their inacomodate condition had brought upon them; so as they dyed sometimes 2. or 3. of a day, in the foresaid time; that of 100. and odd persons, scarce 50. remained. And of these in the time of most distress, ther was but 6. or 7. sound persons, who, to their great commendations be it spoken, spared no pains, night nor day, but